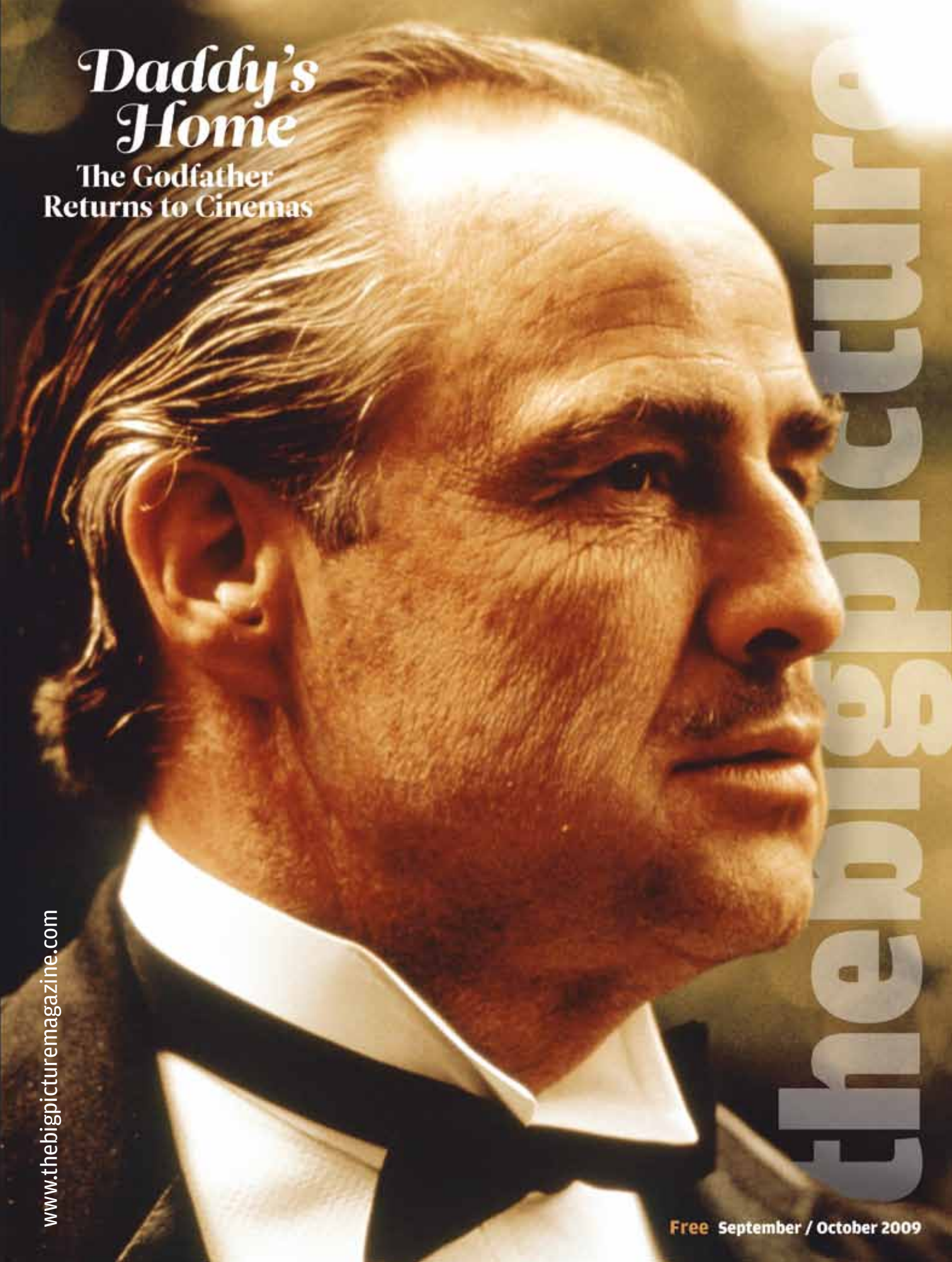
VISIT…



Daddy's Home

The Godfather Returns to Cinemas

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Free September / October 2009

SEXUAL POLITICS AND SOCIAL ALIENATION: DISCOVER THE UNSEEN BRITISH CINEMA OF JANE ARDEN AND JACK BOND.

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"Some day, and that day may never come, I will call upon you to do a service for me. But until that day, consider this justice a gift on my daughter's wedding day."
Don Corleone

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COVER IMAGE THE GODFATHER (COURTESY PARK CIRCUS LTD.)

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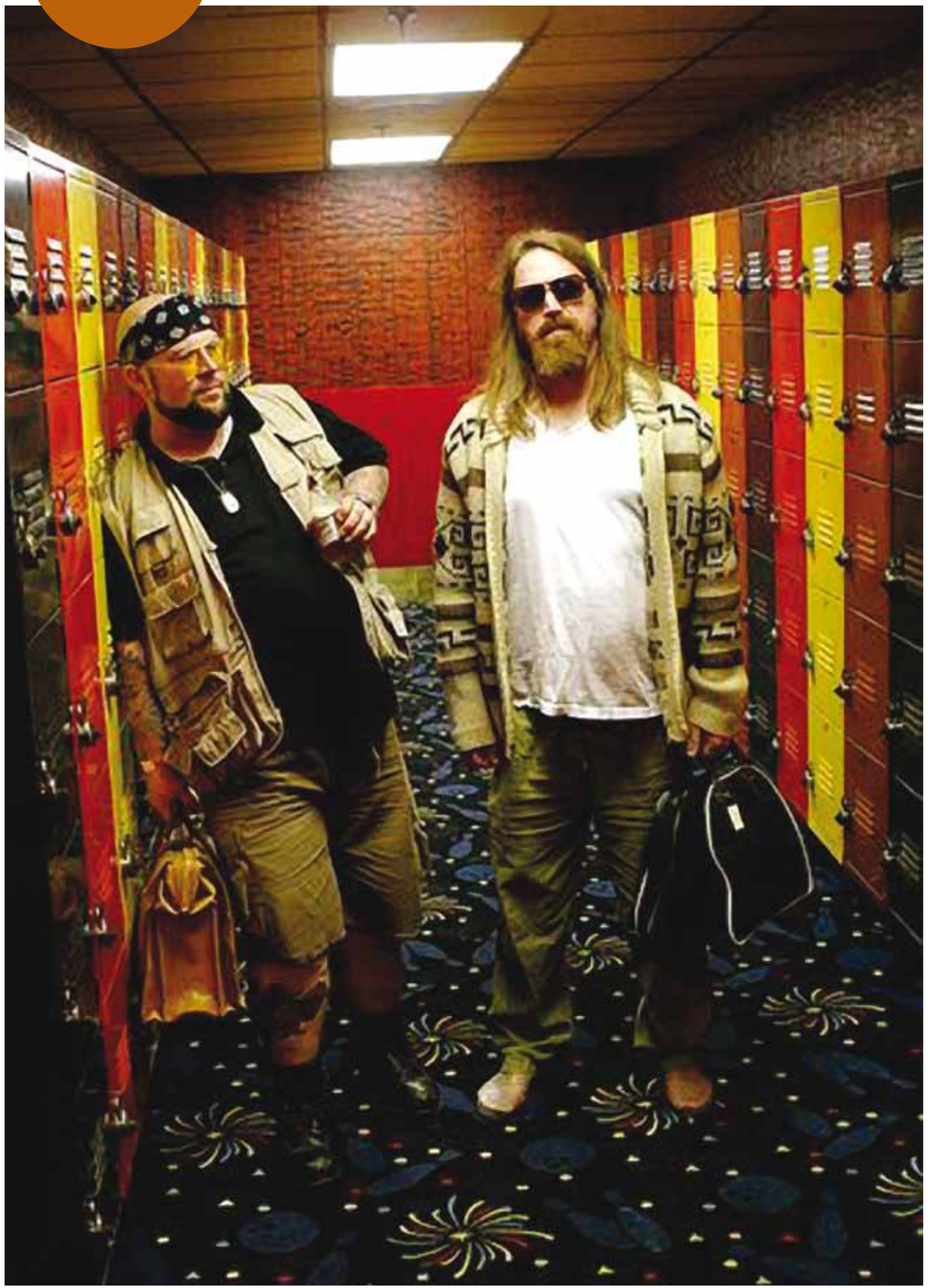


OPPOSITE WALTER AND THE DUDE GET READY TO ROLL / ABOVE I'M A LEBOWSKI, YOU'RE A LEBOWSKI

WHEN LIFE AND THE MOVIES COLLIDE...

Roll Call

Dressing up as a purple-shirted paedophile wouldn't go down well at a *Star Wars* convention. But Lebowski Fest is anything but your average get-together. **Scott Jordan Harris** grabs his bowling ball, dons some shades and takes us behind the scenes.

Few 'cult classics' are genuinely worthy of the title, but *The Big Lebowski* fulfils every cultish criteria. In 'The Dude' it has a modern messiah; in 'Walter Sobchak' a crazy and charismatic prophet; and, in 'Lebowski Fest', a spectacular revivalist roadshow. Lebowski Fest was conceived by Kentuckians Scott Schuffit and Will Russell after a suitably inactive afternoon trading Lebowski-isms whilst failing to sell T-shirts at a tattoo convention. Soon after, they hired a bowling alley and prepared for what they expected to be a one-off gathering of a handful of the film's fans.

Seven years later, the festival is a phenomenon. Touring the major cities of America, it attracts masses of Lebowski-devotees – AKA 'Achievers' – who congregate in costume 'to drink white Russians, throw some rocks and party with an array of Dudes, Walters and Maudes'. (But not, we hope, urinate on each other's rugs or chop off each other's toes.) Film and real life have seldom become as entangled as they are here. In 2002, *Lebowski* stepped off the cinema screen and into the real world at the first Lebowski Fest – and, in 2009, Lebowski Fest stepped out of the real world and onto the cinema screen in Eddie Chung's documentary *The Achievers: The Story of the Lebowski Fans*.

The festival thrives on its underground atmosphere but – as more and more cinephiles cotton onto the brilliance of *The Big Lebowski* and as mainstream moviegoers become increasingly accustomed to the Coens' unique output – that atmosphere may be endangered. I can't imagine anyone is worried, though. After all, the Dude abides.

FIND OUT MORE:
www.lebowskifest.com and
www.theachieversmovie.com

CRIME FAMILIES ON THE SILVER SCREEN

Family Affairs

Whether they're the orphans in *Oliver!* or the itinerant evil-doers of *The Last House on the Left*, criminals on film are often as preoccupied with creating surrogate families alongside other outlaws as they are with actually doing anything illegal. Here are some classic examples. **Words by Scott Jordan Harris**

Image Courtesy of Park Circus Limited

The Godfather (1972)

Dir. Francis Ford Coppola

The definitive juxtaposition of the family and 'The Family', *The Godfather*'s portrait of the American dream realized by un-American means is unlikely ever to be equalled. As *Citizen Kane* did for films in general, so Francis Ford Coppola's first instalment of the Corleone crime family saga did for gangster movies – surpassing everything that came before and influencing everything that came after. Practically no aspect of the film (in which the acting, script, costumes, cinematography and score are all iconic) can be faulted and, without being wilfully silly, its impact on modern American moviemaking is hard to overestimate. Making movie immortals of Coppola, Al Pacino, James Caan and Robert Duvall, and solidifying Marlon Brando's status as the great American actor, *The Godfather* has, since its release, been the movie against which everyone measures any film to even mention the Mafia, and against which millions of fans measure any film they see.

The Godfather *is back in UK cinemas from 25 September.* *See page 46' for further details*

The Godfather's impact on modern American moviemaking is hard to overestimate.

LEFT MARLON BRANDO LENDS AN EAR

Kobal

Through their outlaw lifestyle, their surrogate family succeeds in breaking the bondage of the Great Depression.

ABOVE GUNS ON THE RUN: *BONNIE AND CLYDE*

Bonnie and Clyde (1967)
Dir. Arthur Penn

The eponymous anti-hero and anti-heroine play Ma and Pa to America's first family of bank robbers in Hollywood's last great gangster film of the pre-*Godfather* age. Through their outlaw lifestyle, their surrogate family succeeds in breaking the bondage of the Great Depression whilst the law-abiding equivalents around them struggle to hold off starvation. Tellingly, it is a traditional family connection that brings about their bloody downfall in cinema's most imitated ambush.

Oliver! (1968)
Dir. Carol Reed

With the light-fingered Fagin operating as patriarch; the bullish Bill Sikes as an abusive big brother; and Nancy as an older sister, *Oliver!*'s fraternity of juvenile pickpockets is – despite its appearance in a family-friendly sing-along sensation – as deserving a subject for our spotlight as any other. The group is one of film's most prominent examples of the disenfranchised, forced to ensure their survival by creating surrogate kin from those who live outside the law – and, Bollywood aside, is the only crime family that can carry a decent show tune.

Image Courtesy of Park Circus Limited

Bollywood aside, this is the only crime family that can carry a decent show tune.

Kobal (2)

The Last House on the Left (1972)
Dir. Wes Craven

The film's themes, which include rape, murder and drug abuse shocked audiences, sickened censors and kick-started Wes Craven's career.

ABOVE THE FAMILY THAT SLAYS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER

Wes Craven's notorious 1970s shocker (tagline: 'To avoid fainting keep repeating, "It's only a movie, it's only a movie, it's only a movie…"') explodes when a classic middle-class American family meets a criminal 'anti-family' headed by sociopathic sex killer Krug. He has a pseudo-wife, whom he shares with his pseudo-brother, and a biological son to whom he deals drugs (and on whom he deliberately inflicted a heroin habit). When he rapes and shoots Dr and Mrs Collingwood's delectable daughter, he unleashes in them the same murderous instincts he displays daily, leading to an eruption of revenge that shocked audiences, sickened censors and kick-started Craven's career.

Romper Stomper (1992)
Dir. Geoffrey Wright

The rootless youths… are united not by martial aims or military order but the simple need to anchor themselves to other human beings.

ABOVE BALD AMBITION: *ROMPER STOMPER*'S MOTLEY CREW

Whatever differences *Romper Stomper*'s Aussie skinheads imagine separate them from the Vietnamese immigrants they habitually batter – and are eventually battered by – the most obvious to the audience is that, whilst their enemies' community is based on family, theirs compensates for its absence. They might imagine themselves to be an army, but the rootless youths enthralled by Russell Crowe's charismatic sociopath are united not by martial aims or military order but the simple need to anchor themselves to other human beings. Critics have always stressed that *Romper Stomper* is abrasive, ambiguous and an unmerciful assault on its audience. They seldom mention that it is also an exploration of the vacuum created when families disintegrate.

Kobal

At the end of a film in which mobsters, policemen and movie moguls are massacred, the young family is about the only thing that survives.

True Romance (1993)
Dir. Tony Scott

The most romantic of romance-on-the-run movies and – as it's scripted by Quentin Tarantino – also the most ostentatiously ultra-violent, *True Romance* is unique here in showing a traditional family forged in crime, as Christian Slater cements his marriage to Patricia Arquette (and reconnects with his dad) by murdering her dreadlocked pimp. The film is famous for its incredible cameos, including appearances by Brad Pitt, Gary Oldman, Val Kilmer and James Gandolfini. By far the best of these comes in the quote-along 'Sicilian scene' that pits Christopher Walken at his most terribly intimidating against Dennis Hopper at his most eloquently eccentric. The fall out from their exchange brings about the massacre of mobsters, policemen and movie moguls, whilst the young family is about the only thing that survives. **[tbp]**

Visit the Big Picture website for a follow up piece to this print article.

alsosee... West side Story (1961) / The Godfather Part II (1974) / Kalifornia (1993) / Tsotsi (2005)

Box Clever

They say the key to great ideas is simplicity - a motto 24 year old graphic designer **Brandon Schaefer** seems to adopt when creating new renditions of film posters and DVD sleeves. ➜

Interview by Gabriel Solomons

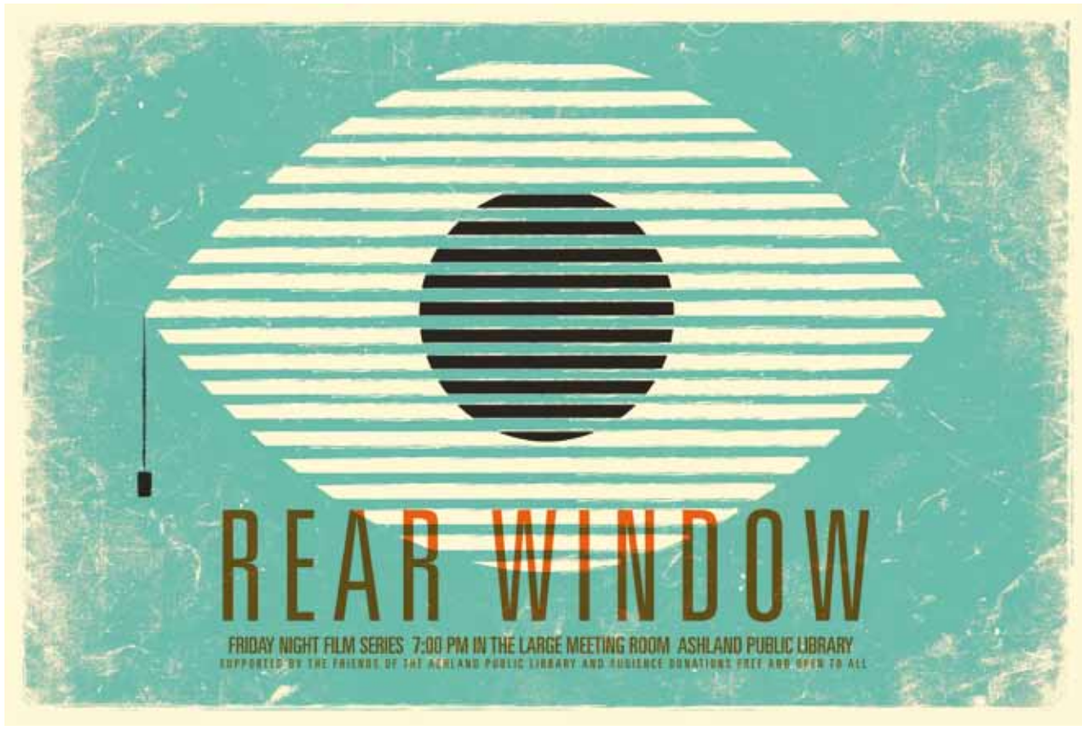
When did film start to play a part in your design work?

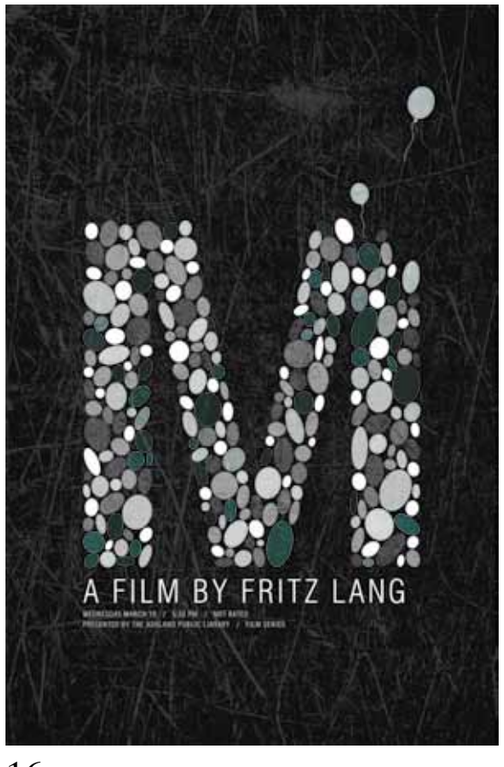
My senior thesis at university was modelled after the game played by Lars von Trier and Jørgen Leth in the film *The Five Obstructions*: I was to re-make a poster I'd done in my third year for Tim Burton's *Big Fish* five different times and each time, I was given a different set of obstructions by the class. You know, things that would trip me up but also force me to make each poster stylistically different. Needless to say, I picked up a lot of bad habits that drive my work today, and can quote more of *Big Fish* than I'd like to admit.

What inspired your blu ray movie sleeves?

I was looking for a way to try and force myself to sum up a film, or an idea from a film in the simplest way possible. Part of that comes from believing that it's a good discipline to have, and the other part from just being insufferably lazy. Throw in a lot of time spent studying old Penguin book jackets, record covers, ➜

I was looking for a way to try and force myself to sum up a film, or an idea from a film in the simplest way possible.


REAR WINDOW
FRIDAY NIGHT FILM SERIES 7:00 PM IN THE LARGE MEETING ROOM ASHLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY
SUPPORTED BY THE FRIENDS OF THE ASHLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY AND AUDIENCE DONATIONS FREE AND OPEN TO ALL



A lot of film posters today are creatively bankrupt, or worse, look and feel the same.

TOP HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU: ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S *REAR WINDOW*
LEFT INNOCENCE LOST IN FRITZ LANG'S *M*

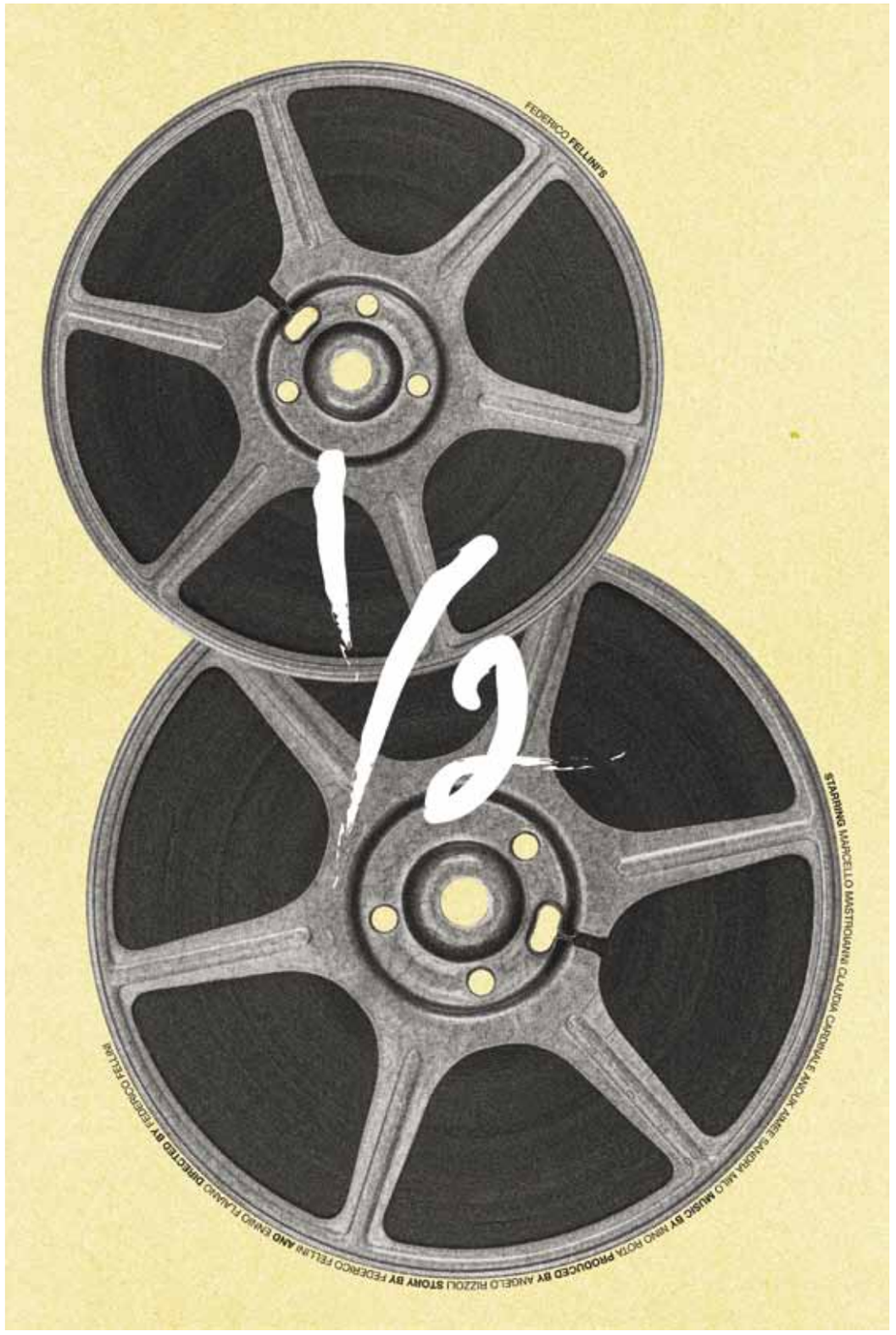
and Experimental Jetset's *Helvetica* Bluray packaging, and out popped the sleeves.

What is it about movies that make them such a great area to draw inspiration from for your own work?

That's tough to answer. I think that I'd chalk a lot of it up to the clichéd answer of really loving film. Enjoying something makes drawing from it that much easier, so working on posters for films I've seen makes the research phase of the project less daunting and opens more room up for experimentation in a short amount of time.

Do you have any particular designers that influence your ideas or the work itself?

Bob Gill's writing has had a heavy impact on how I try and work myself to an idea. He favors a lot of thinking before designing, and often arrives at witty solutions – something I strive for regularly. When it comes to style, I get sucked in all over the place, although I seem to have a soft-spot for American Modernism.


FEDERICO FELLINI'S
STARRING MARCELLO MASTROIANNI CLAUDIA CARDINALE ANOUK AIMEE SANDRA MILO MUSIC BY NINO ROTA PRODUCED BY ANGELO RIZZOLI STORY BY FEDERICO FELLINI AND ENNIO FLAIANO DIRECTED BY FEDERICO FELLINI

LEFT GOING ROUND IN CIRCLES: FEDERICO FELLINI'S MASTERFUL *8 1/2*

What is your favourite film poster and why?

It's a tie between *Dancer In the Dark*'s eye chart and *The Rocketeer*'s art deco poster. They are the only two that I can recall having made a distinct impression on me when I saw them, but for very different reasons. *Dancer* is unabashedly simple aesthetically but wonderfully clever, while *Rocketeer* is just a pure joy to look at. It's a shame neither of them were used as the covers for their respected DVDs.

What elements do you believe make a great film poster?

Clever, witty ideas mixed with a bit of visual flair, just so you don't get bored. A lot of posters today are creatively bankrupt, or worse, look and feel the same. So I'd say that if a poster at least tries to say something and avoids resorting to over-Photoshopped floating heads of actors with the movie title lazily slapped on in Trajan or Bank Gothic, then it's on the right track.

Finally, why does film matter?

It tells stories, which can make us think and feel in ways that we wouldn't normally think possible. It can scare us, make us laugh, or make us cry. It creates experiences that can be shared, discussed, or used to inspire. And above all, it entertains. **[tbp]**

See more of Brandon Schaefer's work at www.seekandspeak.com

alsosee... www.seekandspeak.com / www.flickr.com/photos/brandonschaefer / Bob Gill [Designer]

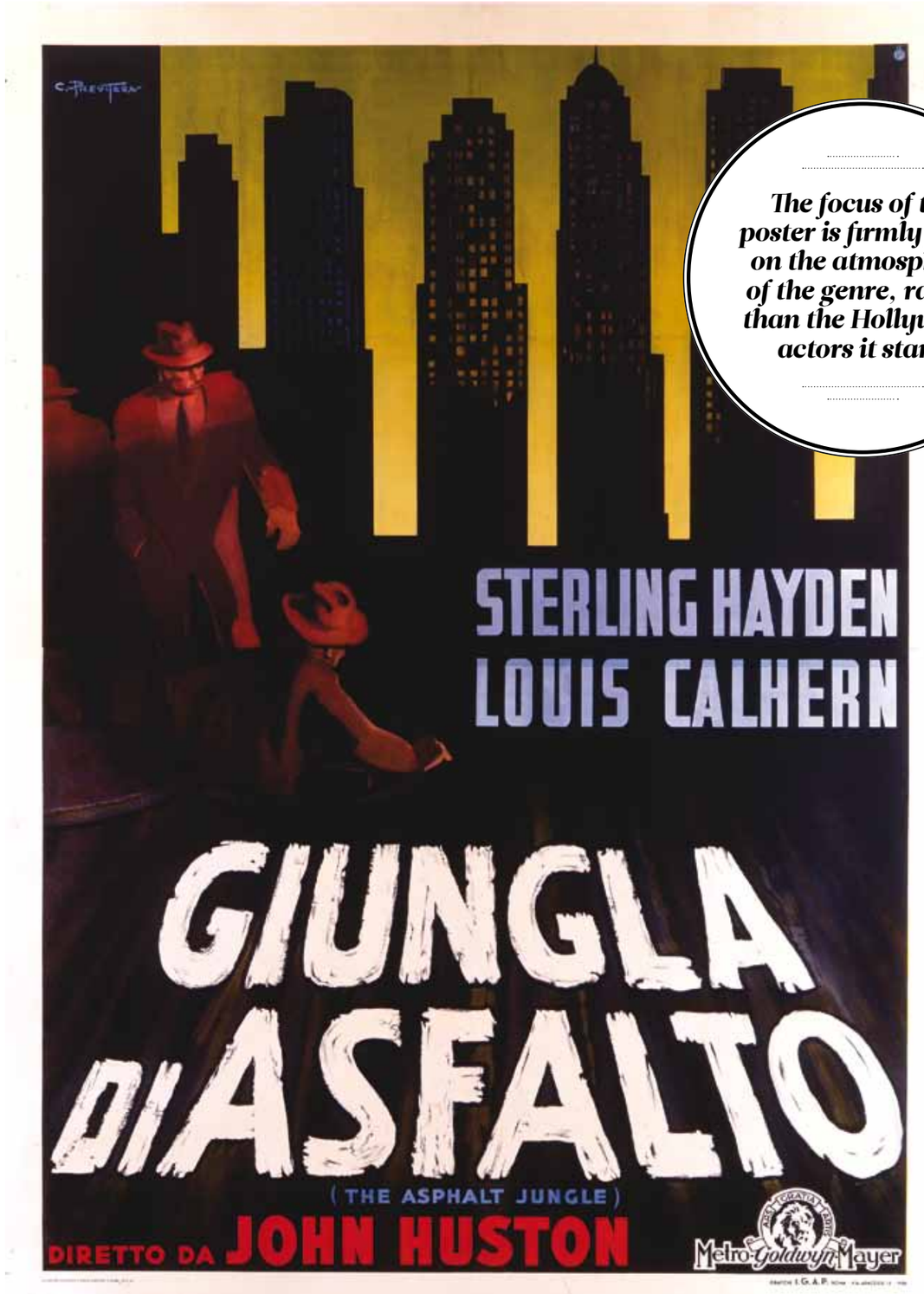
DECONSTRUCTING FILM POSTERS

Mean Streets

The crime genre has long been a prime candidate for evocative film poster imagery – with themes of corruption, betrayal and lawlessness acting as the perfect triggers for atmospheric graphics. Once again, **Tony Nourmand** from London's Reel Poster Gallery selects a few choice examples for further examination.

Despite only a privileged few being able to afford the indulgence of buying an original, the imagery of classic film posters is familiar to most – through DVD packaging, re-releases at local picture houses, and flimsy xeroxed reproductions sold in the backstreets of Soho. To examine some of the lesser-known posters from around the world is therefore both fascinating and refreshing. Indeed, it is often these rarer, more unusual styles that manage to capture the true essence of a film and remain some of the most sought after posters in the collectables market.

A great example is the large Italian poster for *The Asphalt Jungle*. This remains one of the most striking and atmospheric film noir posters and embodies the very essence of noir; faceless men hidden in the shadows of a stark cityscape. The focus of the poster is firmly fixed on the atmosphere of the genre, rather than the Hollywood actors it stars. ➜



The focus of the poster is firmly fixed on the atmosphere of the genre, rather than the Hollywood actors it stars.

THE ASPHALT JUNGLE (1950) ORIGINAL ITALIAN / ART BY C. PREVITERA

gofurther... www.reelposter.com [ARTIST] Jan Młodoženiec [ARTIST] Henryk Tomaszewski

SCARFACE (1932) ORIGINAL ITALIAN / FIRST ITALIAN RELEASE 1950s / ART BY RINALDO GELENG

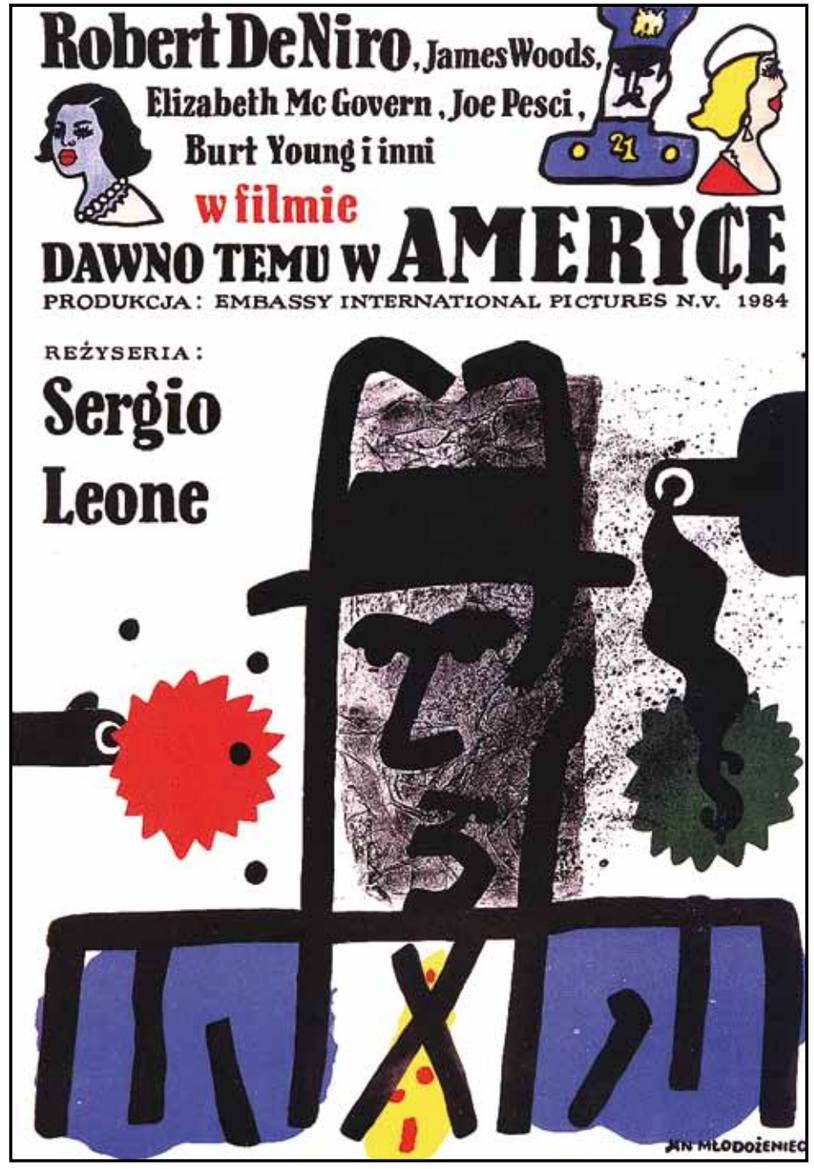
Dangerous lines

The poster for *Scarface* is from the first Italian release of the film in the 1950s. It was banned on its original release by Mussolini, who prohibited any movies which portrayed Italian gangsters, believing them to be an insidious use of American propaganda. Many of these films were thus released for the first time after the war.

Poles apart

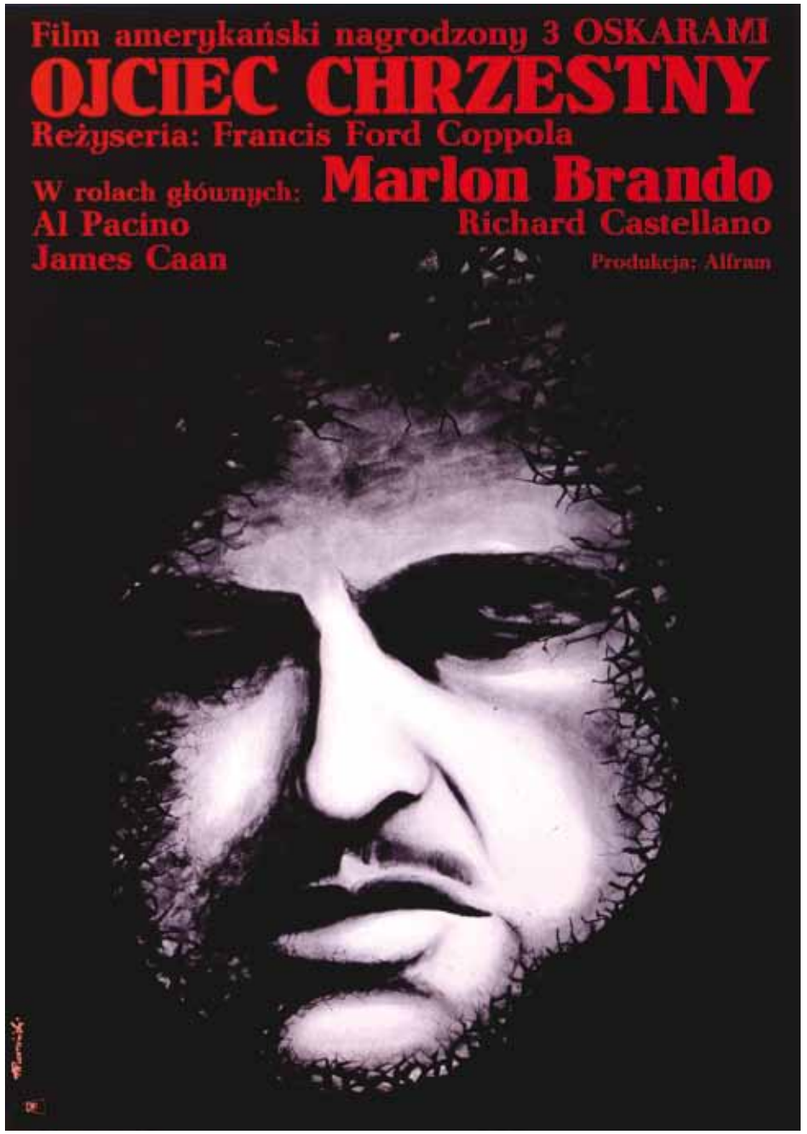
In contrast, Jan Młodożeniec' Polish poster for *Once Upon a Time in America* takes a much more light-hearted approach to poster design. Młodożeniec (1929-2000) was responsible for over 400 poster designs and was one of the most prolific and celebrated Polish poster artists of the twentieth century. A contemporary of Ruminiski, he studied under Henryk Tomaszewski, one of the original and leading influences on the development of Polish film poster art. Młodożeniec has won several awards for his work and his artwork for *Once Upon a Time in America* is a perfect example of his inimitable style.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (1984) ORIGINAL POLISH / ART BY JAN MŁODOŻENIEC



Jan Młodożeniec was responsible for over 400 poster designs and was one of the most celebrated Polish poster artists of the twentieth century.

THE GODFATHER (1972)
ORIGINAL POLISH
ART BY TOMASZ RUMINSKI



Shadow play

The Polish poster for *The Godfather* follows in the tradition of Eastern European poster art in exploring the darker elements within the film. Brando's clay-like features are shown slowly crumbling into the shadows and the blood-red lettering further adds to this most striking and unusual of poster designs. The artwork is by Tomasz Ruminiski (1930–1982), a graduate of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Art. He began working in the industry in his mid-twenties and over the next twenty-five years produced an impressive body of work, particularly in the field of film, tourism and advertising posters. He has won several awards and his art has been exhibited worldwide. His design for the Polish poster of *The Godfather* remains one of his most recognized works. **[tbp]**

Brando's clay – like features are shown slowly crumbling into the shadows and the blood – red lettering further adds to this most striking and unusual of poster designs.

filmint.fi

Image: Edlow Mathew Tang's B420 (2005)

***
DIALOGUE AROUND THE MOVING IMAGE
***

FILM INTERNATIONAL.

Published as a bi-monthly, full colour journal, *Film International* covers all aspects of film culture in a visually dynamic way.

This new breed of film magazine brings together established film scholars with renowned journalists to provide an informed and animated commentary on the spectacle of world cinema.

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ABOUT THE SOUTHEAST ASIA MOVIE THEATER PROJECT

‘THIS IS A PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE *of derelict or converted movie theaters in Southeast Asia. Ever since the convenience of the home entertainment center has become widely available, movie theater-going has been on the path to extinction. Declining audiences and rising operational costs have made the business feasible only for larger conglomerates, while the independent, family-run theater has been squeezed out of the picture. Here their memories are kept alive. Going or gone, but not forgotten.’*

★ ‘THE PROJECTIONIST’ ★ SEATHEATER.BLOGSPOT.COM ★

‘INFERIOR QUALITY SOVIET-MADE PROJECTORS, RUSTING AWAY IN A STORAGE SHED’ NEAR THE RACHINEE THEATER IN LUANG PRABANG, LAOS. ‘THEY CONSISTENTLY BURNED THROUGH FILM AND COULDN’T PLAY OLD MOVIES.’

THE RACHINEE THEATER
IN LUANG PRABANG, LAOS

THE KEMALAT CINEMA
SHAN STATE, BURMA (INTERIOR)

THE KEMALAT CINEMA
SHAN STATE, BURMA

Past Projections

Known only as ‘The Projectionist’, an intrepid Asian blogger is on a one man mission to document rundown film theaters in his corner of the continent.

Pictures by ‘The Projectionist’
Words by Scott Jordan Harris

TUNG SAVANG VDO
LUANG NAMTHA, LAOS

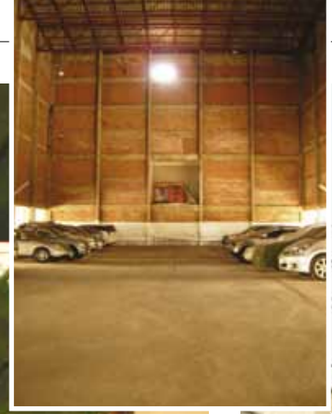
THE HAWAII THEATRE
BANGKOK

TUNG SAVANG VDO
LUANG NAMTHA, LAOS
(INTERIOR)

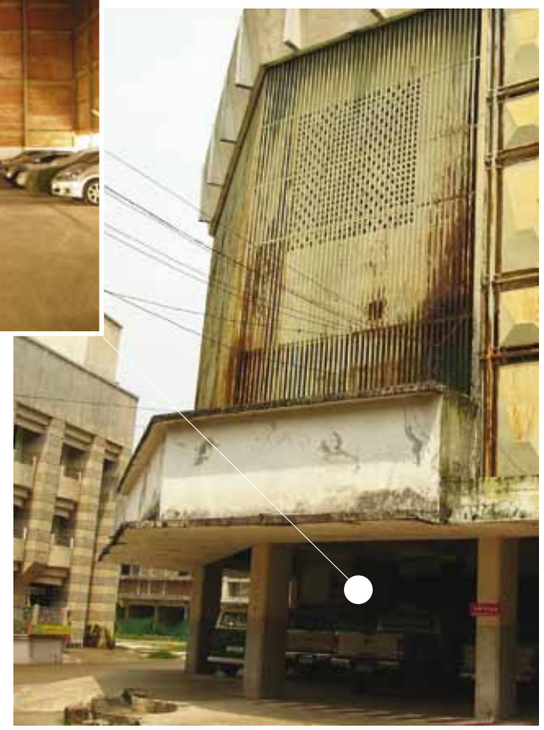
THE HAWAII THEATRE
BANGKOK (INTERIOR)

‘The Projectionist’ is an unusually focused blogger; since beginning The Southeast Asia Movie Theater Project in March, the mystery cinephile has made almost 100 entries. Three parts photo essay to one part travel log, each post details the decrepitude of a formerly thriving picture house. Mixing a film enthusiast’s anger at the changing times with an anthropologist’s interest in the ability of people to adapt to them, The Projectionist has created, in The Theater Project, a startling standout amongst the dross that clogs the blogosphere.

What’s so extraordinary about the entries, aside from the dedication that drives them, is their way of capturing three time periods – a cinema’s glorious past, sad present and inevitable or uncertain future – with a single sentence or image. To look at The Projectionist’s picture of what was once Bangkok’s Capital City Cinema Hall but is now its Klongthom Market is to see in an instant the hopes of those who opened it; the rapt attention of those who



THE THEPNAKON RAMA THEATER IN NAKON PHANOM, THAILAND



To look at The Projectionist's picture of what was once Bangkok's Capital City Cinema Hall but is now its Klongthom Market is to see in an instant the hopes of those who opened it…

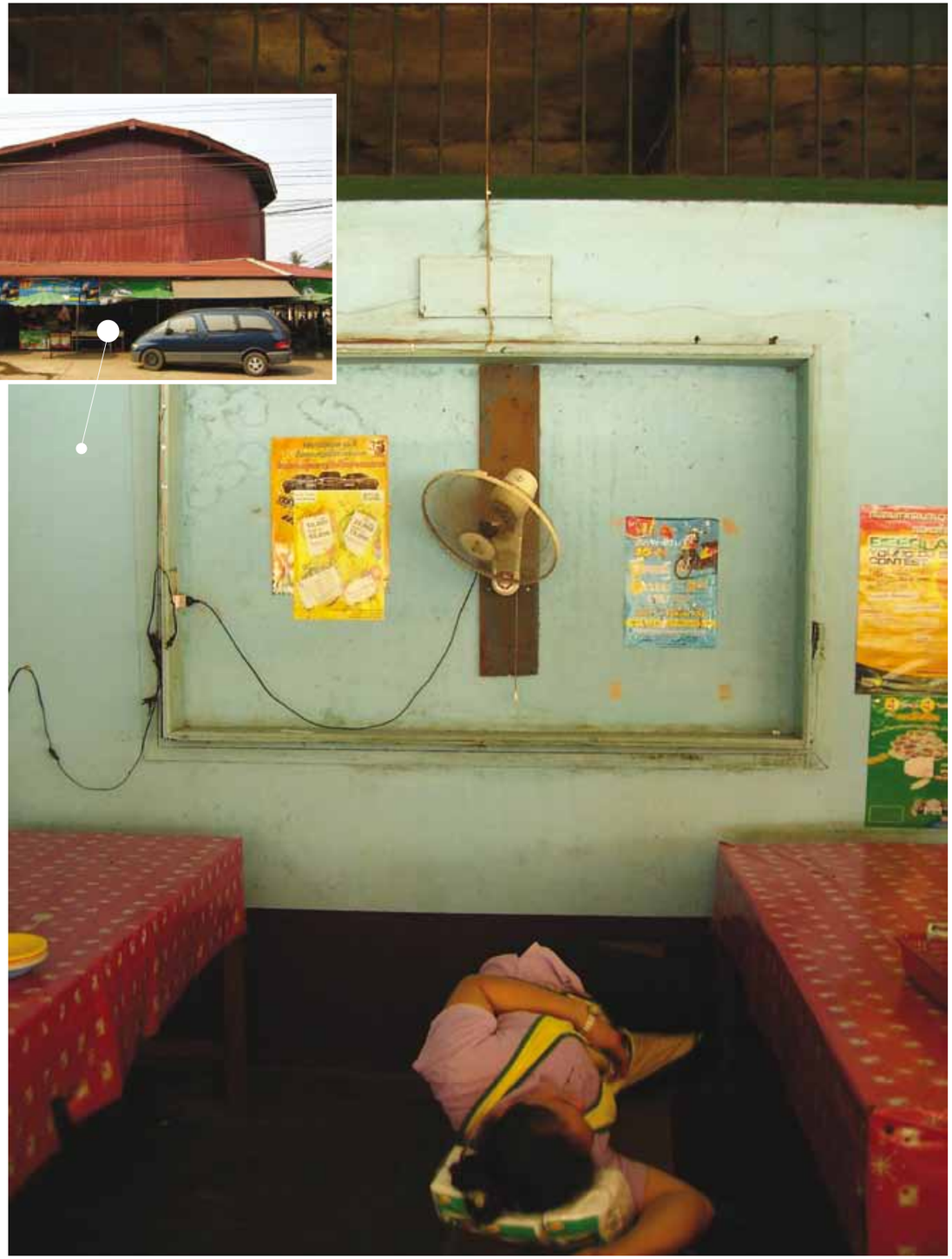
'LOOKING TOWARDS WHERE THE SCREEN USED TO BE': THE CAPITAL CINEMA HALL IN BANGKOK, THAILAND 'IS NOW HOME TO THE KLONGTHOM MARKET, A RETAIL CENTER NOTORIOUS FOR CARRYING BOOTLEGGED ELECTRONIC GOODS.'

attended its screenings; the cooling commercial climate that forced its closure; and its future as either a garish mall or dull redevelopment without a sign of its picture house past. What we don't see, but The Projectionist points out, is that between the theatre's decline and its fall it survived as a cinema by illegally playing porn films.

Other cinemas still do. Introducing the Hawaii Theater in Bangkok, The Projectionist, endearingly and comically, stresses its historical significance as 'one of the few [cinemas] in Thailand to feature an escalator in the lobby' before wistfully noting, 'most of the neighborhood residents I spoke to didn't even realize that the Hawaii is still open, stealthily showing pornography to cover its costs.' Its owner is happy to be interviewed, and photographed, and to talk about the Hawaii's heyday, when it employed '40 full-time staff' and boasted 'at 1860… the largest seating capacity of any theater in Thailand ever'.

The operators at other now off-the-radar establishments aren't so accommodating, shooing The Projectionist from the premises with unsubtle threats and admonishments that their kind of customer, watching their kind of film, is unlikely to welcome immortality on the pages of The Theater Project. At the architecturally-impressive Phaholyothin Rama Theater, The Projectionist and his girlfriend are welcomed by 'a snickering ticket lady' but warned they might prefer to visit the cinema across the street. Intrigued, they press on inside.

Hoping for a family film show but admitting to each other they are expecting porn, they find instead a gay cruising location, the movie ('a weird 1980s made-for-video British film, dubbed in Thai and… coming from an LCD projector') running only so the patrons can assess each other before pairing up and heading for the →



ABOVE A 'NOODLE VENDOR CATCHES A NAP BENEATH AN OLD POSTER CASE' AT THE ROCK PORT NORTH THEATER IN PAKSE, LAOS

'We'd like to find a tenant,' she added, 'but the place is in crap condition and it would cost too much to fix. Tearing it down would also have a high price.'

TOP / THE KEMALAT CINEMA IN KENG TUNG, SHAN STATE, BURMA: 'NOW HOME TO THIS OLD WOMAN AND HER DAUGHTER.'

lavatories. 'How come nobody is watching the movie?' asks The Projectionist's girlfriend.

'Let's go and I'll tell you outside,' he replies.

But not every cinema he visits has fallen into disrepute as well as disrepair. Some have been turned into car parks, others into restaurants; some house noodle sellers, others house the homeless. In Burma, The Projectionist finds The Kemalat Cinema. Once its screen hosted Bruce Lee and its seats scores of his adolescent admirers but it has now a more sedate inhabitant: an aged woman who has made it her home. The Projectionist wishes to talk to her, to learn how and why she came to live in an otherwise abandoned picture house, but cannot cross the language barrier between them and is 'limited to visual pleasantries'. Upset by this, he resolves to return soon, and to bring a guide.

It is this commitment to the future of The Southeast Asia Movie Theater Project that is the most admirable aspect of the entire endeavour. The Projectionist's attitude to endangered cinemas is like that of Sir David Attenborough to endangered species: he hopes to stimulate conservation efforts not by haranguing his audience and hysterically spelling out worst case scenarios, but by simply employing his passion, his time and his talent to show us the irreplaceable beauty that will be lost if his subjects are forever abandoned to the whims of modernity. **[tbp]**

Visit the South East Asia Movie Theater Project at seatheater.blogspot.com/ or email The Projectionist at: sea.theater@hotmail.com

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BELOW *STRANGER THAN PARADISE* BELOW RIGHT *SLACKER*

Kobal (2)

MOMENTS THAT CHANGED FILM FOREVER

The Birth of the *American 'Indie'*

A relatively new phenomenon to our cinema screens, the emergence of the American independent film scene heralded a wave of organic film making outside of the Hollywood system. Far from being just a trend for the Converse-clad demographic, the American 'indie' has continued to act as a challenge and an alternative to mainstream film culture. **Text by Gail Tolley**

...little financing, no big names, no studio sets – just the desire to make a film the way they wanted.

Somewhere around the late 1980s a handful of directors dotted around the US set about making a handful of films. They had little financing, no big names, no studio sets – just the desire to make a film in the way they wanted. If it doesn't sound particularly radical now, perhaps it's a testament to how far we've come, but from this small number of filmmakers a whole surge in independent filmmaking followed. There wasn't one film but many which started things off and pin-pointing exactly which ones is a difficult task, but we can name the key contenders: Gus Van Sant's *Drugstore Cowboy*, Steven Soderberg's *Sex, Lies and Videotape*, Richard Linklater's *Slacker* and perhaps, a few years earlier, Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger than Paradise*. These films marked the birth of something new – the American indie – and over the next couple of decades this new scene hovered on the edge of the commercial film making world, occasionally dipping its toe into its murky waters.

In contrast to the underground and avant-garde film scenes of previous decades the American independent movement had stronger ties to the Hollywood system. It is hardly believable that one director, such as Gus Van Sant, could be responsible for such diverse work as *Good Will Hunting* (conventional, sentimental and ripe for the Oscars) and *Elephant* (minimalist, challenging and winner of the ultimate art cinema honour - the Palm d'Or at Cannes). It's also difficult to believe that a director could move so effortlessly from the margins to the mainstream as Steven Soderberg did. His hit, *Sex, Lies and Videotape*, made in 1989, is often heralded as one of the original American 'indie' flicks. It took the world by surprise; an intelligent, dialogue-focused piece that was made for peanuts. It was one of the first examples of a low budget film becoming not only a critical success but a commercial one too. Soderberg would then go on to direct *Erin Brockovich* and *Traffic*, both in 2000, and more recently the two-part Che Guevara biopic.

Richard Linklater's 1991 ➔

film, *Slacker* was equally influential, it amassed a dedicated following, confirming that there were audiences who were keen for new cinematic experiences. *Slacker* follows the idle chatter of the inhabitants of Austin, Texas. Linklater's camera follows the conversations of one character before latching on to another passing by and following them, creating a patchwork of dialogues and experiences. The anti-narrative approach couldn't be further from the Hollywood model. The film is also a prime example of the American independent's fondness in fusing pop and youth culture with a sensibility for European arthouse and world cinema. Another example is Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise*. The director's minimalism, his use of long tracking shots and static camera are influenced in part by the Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu (look out for the reference to *Tokyo Story*). Whilst at the same time he purportedly recruited his actors from the New York punk scene that he was part of, explaining the punk aesthetic that is visible in the project too.

The independent production company Miramax Films played a pivotal role in supporting independent films during the 1980s and 1990s. Their releases include the aforementioned *Sex, Lies and Videotape*, Kevin Smith's *Clerks* and also Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs*. Established by the Weinstein brothers the company became hugely profitable and, in 1993, was bought by Disney. Never one to miss a money-making opportunity, the big Hollywood studios soon latched on. In 1994 20th Century Fox established a separate division called Fox Searchlight which had a special focus on independent films and, in 2004, Time Warner created Picturehouse. Whilst these smaller films were not always making the same sort of money as the blockbusters, in relation to their low budgets they represented huge commercial potential. In 2007 Fox Searchlight had its highest ever grossing film with the release of *Juno*, which grossed over thirty times its original budget. For many the involvement of the studios indicated that the heyday of the American independent was over and in its place a commercially-oriented 'Indiewood' had taken hold.

For many the involvement of the studios indicated that the heyday of the American independent was over and in its place a commercially – oriented 'Indiewood' had taken hold.

ABOVE CHRISTINA RICCI AND VINCENT GALLO IN *BUFFALO '66 (1998)*

Whilst some bemoan the passing of a time when intelligent, home-grown films made it to our screens in significant numbers, there's still an independent spirit to be found in many films coming out of the States. Andrew Bujalski's distinct, naturalistic style has delighted critics; his first two films *Funny Ha Ha* and *Mutual Appreciation* were both shot on 16mm giving a 'lo-fi' look at the lives of post-university twenty-somethings. Darren Aronofsky has also been championed by the scene; his 1998 film *Pi* showed a unique style and way of story–telling that was explored further in 2000's *Requiem for a Dream*. At the same time the founding fathers are still going strong – the new millennium saw Linklater's *A Scanner Darkly* and *Before Sunset*, Jarmusch's *Broken Flowers* and Van Sant's *Paranoid Park* to name but a few.

If the American independent film appears difficult to define, you'd be right, it's shifting, diverse, existing somewhere around the fuzzy margins of Hollywood. Some of its practitioners have started outside and then moved in (as is the case with Steven Soderberg), others have stayed as far away as possible (Jim Jarmusch comes to mind) and others still have dipped in and out as they please (take Gus Van Sant). The purists will champion the likes of Jarmusch's *Stranger Than Paradise*, Van Sant's Death Trilogy (including *Elephant, Jerry* and *Last Days*) perhaps Vincent Gallo's *Buffalo '66* as fine examples of a truly 'independent' American cinema. But many would stretch the definition to include a number of more commercially-friendly films (*Donnie Darko, Being John Malkovich* and *Juno*). What can't be denied is the impact that so many of these films have had. The nature of the scene has allowed directors the freedom to be both politically daring and visually experimental – not just providing the world with a fine batch of films but also representing experiences and views that are rarely voiced. **[tbp]**

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alsosee... Drugstore Cowboy (1989) / Juno (2007)

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LEFT THINGS GO FROM BAD TO WORSE IN *BICYCLE THIEVES*
RIGHT *ROMAN HOLIDAY*

Rome

Rome's cobbled alleyways and sun-drenched streets have inspired some of the world's most celebrated filmmakers and one of cinema's most important movements. **Nicholas Page** picks out some of this ancient city's most iconic movies.

Bicycle Thieves (1948)

Dir. Vittorio De Sica
Italy, 93 minutes
Starring Lamberto Maggiorani, Enzo Staiola

Perhaps the defining film of Italian Neo-realist cinema, Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* follows a simple labourer who is lucky enough to land a job putting up posters around the city. However, on his very first day disaster strikes and a young thief nabs his brand new bike. So begins a chase all over Rome looking for any clue as to the missing bicycle or, indeed, the crook who swiped it. The desperate story of a common man, *Bicycle Thieves* is one of Italian cinema's most cherished and important works.

Roman Holiday (1953)

Dir. William Wyler
USA, 118 minutes
Starring Gregory Peck, Audrey Hepburn

Shot partly at Rome's famous Cinecittà studios, *Roman Holiday* stars Gregory Peck and the then unheard-of Belgian actress Audrey Hepburn as Princess Ann, a young character of unspecified royalty who is on a 'good will' tour around Europe. Once in Rome everything becomes too much for Her Highness, and she escapes the attentions of her minders to experience a little freedom. *Roman Holiday* fulfills its own title: it is a breezy, humorous trip through an unforgettable city with a little romance thrown in for good measure.

Kobal (1) *Bicycle Thieves* image coutesy of Park Circus Ltd.

The Best of Youth (2003)

Dir. Marco Tullio Giordana
Italy, 366 minutes
Starring Luigi Lo Cascio, Alessio Boni, Adriana Asti, Maya Sansa

Marco Tullio Giordana's *The Best of Youth* is an epic family drama spanning four decades and with a run-time touching six hours. The film chronicles the lives of two brothers, Matteo and Nicola, from their youth in, 1960s' Rome to their comfortable retirement at the turn of the millennium. During their eventful lives we witness many memorable moments in Italian history, from the Florence floods of 1966 to the height of Mafia oppression in Sicily – all of which is intertwined with an aching romance.

La Dolce Vita (1960)

Dir. Federico Fellini
Italy, 174 minutes
Starring Marcello Mastroianni, Anita Ekberg, Anouk Aimée

Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* is undoubtedly the most important film Rome – even Italy – has ever produced. A work of artistic depth and influence, the film concerns a handsome young journalist named Marcello who is obsessed with the decadence of 1960s' Rome and so spends his time hanging out with the local paparazzi as opposed to shaping a career for himself. To the beat of Nino Rota's exquisite drum we follow Marcello around a Rome of crumbling values and cultural confusion, as he searches for life's meanings in the faces and bodies of the women he meets.

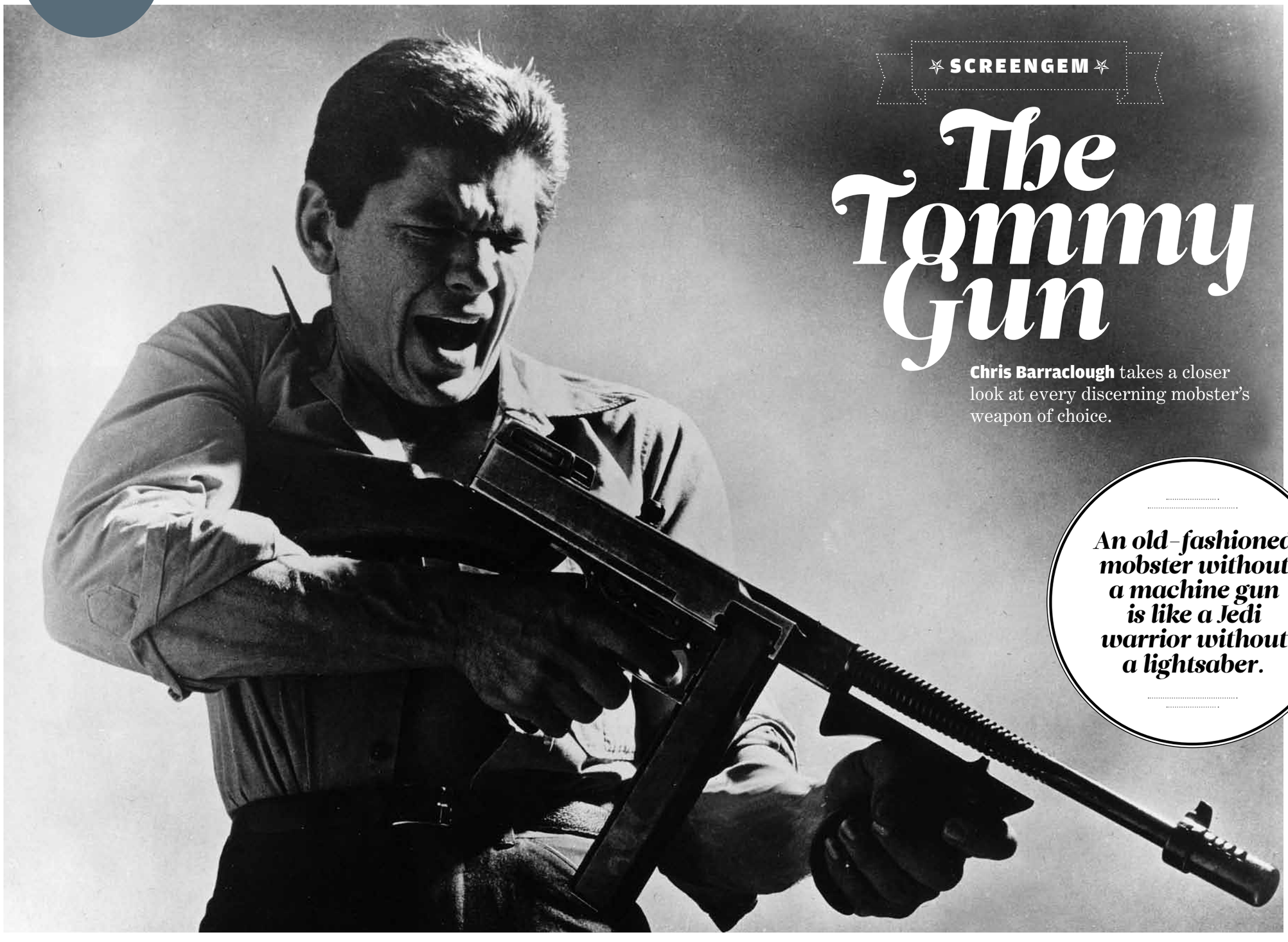
La Dolce Vita is undoubtedly the most important film Rome – even Italy – has ever produced.

ABOVE GROWING UP IS HARD TO DO: *THE BEST OF YOUTH*

RIGHT ANITA EKBERG MAKES A SPLASH *IN LA DOLCE VITA*

Kobal (2)

alsosee... Big Deal on Madonna Street (1958) / The Talented Mr. Ripley (2002)



SCREENGEM

The Tommy Gun

Chris Barraclough takes a closer look at every discerning mobster's weapon of choice.

An old-fashioned mobster without a machine gun is like a Jedi warrior without a lightsaber.

The Thompson sub-machine gun – tommy gun for short – was first wielded in a motion picture by Boris Karloff, in *Scarface: The Shame of a Nation* (1932). 'Three hundred slugs a minute' he crows as he cradles one of the automated weapons. Tony Camonte, the 'scarface' of the title, is even more infatuated when he finally gets his hands on one. With a cry of sexual ecstasy ('Get outta my way, Johnny, I'm gonna spit!'), he unloads the entire chamber into the nearest wall, reducing a row of pool cues to matchsticks.

The underworld was once synonymous with the humble tommy gun, which remains an essential classic accessory alongside the pin-stripe suit and fedora hat. An old-fashioned mobster without a machine gun is like a Jedi warrior without a lightsaber. Hundreds of film posters have featured the weapon, from classics such as *Machine Gun Kelly*, to modern updates like *Public Enemies*, when Johnny Depp's John Dillinger boldly clutches one in a daytime city scene.

The devastation caused when a tommy gun lets rip isn't something that's easily forgotten. Take the ending to *Bonnie and Clyde*, where the infamous couple writhe and buckle – seemingly for minutes – as round after round slams into them. The scene was later paid homage in Coppola's *Godfather*, when Sonny is led into a deadly trap at a New York tollbooth. While the tommy gun is anything but accurate, it makes up for its shortcomings with sheer firepower: as soon as one points your way, you know your number's up.

Of course, some movies have portrayed the gun in a more comedic manner. *Home Alone* and its sequel introduced the film-within-a-film *Angels With Filthy Souls*, in which homicidal maniac Johnny blows away all and sundry with his favourite weapon ('All right, I believe you...but my tommy gun don't!'). Jim Carrey constructs one out of a balloon in *The Mask*, yet the rounds it fires are made of more than just air. Then there's the nefarious mini-mobsters in *Bugsy Malone*, who load their guns not with bullets, but with fat globules of custard. Messy, but delicious. **[tbp]**

alsosee... Scarface: The Shame of a Nation (1932) / Bugsy Malone (1982) / Public Enemies (2009)

ABOVE CHARLES BRONSON GETS TRIGGER HAPPY IN ROGER CORMAN'S *MACHINE GUN KELLY* (1958)

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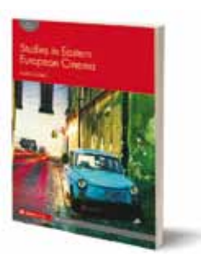

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IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY

Crop Rotation

The image of a disembodied hand brushing through a harvest field has 'cropped' up in more than a few films over the last decade or so, but why is it so popular all of a sudden? **Nicholas Page** explains its usage and the symbolism to be found behind it.

One of world cinema's more evocative and frequently-used visual motifs of recent years is that of hands brushing past crops – a shot that first appeared in Ridley Scott's Roman epic *Gladiator* nearly a decade ago and was then mimicked in the following years by a host of other big-name filmmakers. While Scott's use of this particular piece of imagery symbolized the passage between life and death for Maximus in *Gladiator*, the shot has often been used by other directors to represent different things. In Terrence Malick's *The New World* and Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, for example, it exists as a way to represent some kind of close connection between nature and humanity, whereas with Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* and Andrew Dominik's *The Assassination of Jesse James*, it is used to signify the whimsical and pensive nature of each title character.

***Scott's use of this particular piece of imagery symbolised the passage between life and death for Maximus in* Gladiator.**

ABOVE THE OTHER SIDE OF PARADISE: *GLADIATOR*

THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT

TERRENCE MALICK'S *THE NEW WORLD* (2004)

SOFIA COPPOLA'S *MARIE ANTOINETTE* (2007)

BAZ LUHRMANN'S *AUSTRALIA* (2008)

ANDREW DOMINIK'S *THE ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES BY THE COWARD ROBERT FORD* (2008)

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Putting the movies back where they belong...

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